National Defense University
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Breaking the Code for Operational Planners: A Comparative Analysis of National Security Strategies Since the End of the Cold War

by

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The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Joint Forces Staff College or the Department of Defense.

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In the post-Cold War era, as the NSSRs have become increasingly focused on global affairs, the presidents and their administrations have ascribed a vast array of grandiose modifiers to nearly every objective or goal in their reports. The lack of any apparent prioritization among the national interests and objectives has resulted in nineteen years of political impreciseness, leaving operational planner to filter through the plethora of worldwide interests, goals, and objectives to identify the real priorities and interests which the President is likely to defend with U.S. military forces.

This paper is a case study of every NSSR since the end of the Cold War spanning the administrations of three U.S. presidents. Through analysis of these strategy reports, foundational documents, and the historical record of the use of the U.S. military, this paper will assist operational planners by providing insights and recommendations enabling them to identify what interests, values, or situations have warranted Presidential decisions to employ military force in the past, and are thereby likely indicators of future employment. Those arenas are where operational planners should devote future planning efforts to ensure that the U.S. military remains prepared for post-Cold War conflicts.

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For Andrea, my bride, and our little princess.

I have no greater duty than to serve them in a manner worthy of their love.

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INTRODUCTION

According to U.S. code of law, the National Security Strategy Report (NSSR) of the United States of America annually describes the interests, goals, and objectives that are vital to the nation's security. Since the end of the Cold War, the international landscape has undergone continual change as the world's economies, communications, and politics become increasingly interconnected. While future NSSRs will shape U.S. participation in the Global War on Terrorism and the continued fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, these conflicts are not the only areas of concern for military and civilian planners across the U.S. government. Planning staffs in various organizations of the interagency community reference the NSSRs in order to ensure their planning is accomplished in accordance with the President's guidance. A number of other strategies are directly impacted by the President's strategy—the National Defense Strategy, the National Military Strategy, and the National Strategy for Combating Terrorism are a few examples. Proper understanding and interpretation of the NSSR and its subordinate strategies is essential to campaign planning at the operational level of war—the nexus bridging the strategic level with the tactical level. The thesis of this paper is that operational planners must develop an understanding of the *real* priorities for employing military forces amidst the vast amount of political impreciseness that dominates the NSSRs.

This paper is a case study of every NSSR since the end of the Cold War spanning the administrations of three U.S. presidents. Through analysis of these strategy reports, foundational documents, and the historical record of the use of the U.S. military, this paper will assist operational planners by providing insights and recommendations

enabling them to identify what interests, values, or situations have warranted Presidential decisions to employ military force in the past, and are thereby indicators of future employment. Those arenas are where operational planners should devote future planning efforts to ensure that the U.S. military remains prepared for post-Cold War conflicts.

To set the stage for proper analysis, this paper first identifies the primary purpose, content, and audience of the NSSR through a careful study of U.S. legal documents. The paper will review the formulation of the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 which amended the National Security Act of 1947. However, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the legal requirements under the U.S. code of law, this paper further examines the law in its final amended form, highlighting additional audiences of the NSSR and their subsequent effects on the report's content. This will provide the operational planner with the context necessary for understanding what role vital interest play in the formulation of the national security strategy.

The second portion of this paper discusses the values, goals, and interests which the author assembled from a focused look at the Constitution, its amendments, and the Declaration of Independence. Many of these elements form the basis for the growing emphasis on the democratization of the world, the welcoming of global economies, and the prominence of protecting human rights. Even more importantly, these documents contain many of the vital interests and values that shaped the foundation of the nation and still guide the formulation of the national security strategies in the post-Cold War era. Although the enduring values and interests of these early writings are present in their NSSRs, the post-Cold War administrations have often changed the vital interests making them difficult to predict from year to year.

The third part of this paper examines the NSSRs of the George H. W. Bush, William J. Clinton, and George W. Bush presidencies, offers evidence of their unorganized approach to priorities, and provides a link between the strategies and the interests contained in the historical documents. By comparing the reports of the three presidents, this paper will determine similarities, deviations, and omissions. In other words, the analysis will show what the strategies are saying alike, what they are saying differently, and what they are not saying at all.

The fourth part of this paper conducts a historical analysis of the use of the U.S. military, identifies links between the motives for the president's authorization of force and the vital interests in the NSSRs, and discusses the implications for military and civilian planners.

Lastly, through synthesis of the research and analysis, this paper makes recommendations through the identification of certain *enduring elements* of national security which operational planners will not want to overlook when planning for future contingencies.

CHAPTER 1: LEGAL DOCUMENTS

…in the final analysis, people of goodwill and intelligence will have to place national interests above political, personal, or even organizational concerns if the United States is to be served well by a coherent and appropriate strategy.[1]

Dr. Don M. Snyder, 1995

Chapter Introduction

In order to help determine where planners should direct their attention in the National Security Strategy Reports (NSSRs), it is important to first ask several questions. What *purpose* does the NSSR serve? What should the NSSR *contain*? To *whom* is it written? W*hen* is it published? This chapter analyzes the legal requirements for the NSSR as prescribed by law. Title 50 United States Code (USC), Section 404a, as amended, contains the statutory requirements for the NSSR.[2] However, to fully comprehend the formulation of the law, this section will first address a comprehensive examination of a Senate report from 1986 that addresses the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 (herein referred to as Goldwater-Nichols), which amended the National Security Act of 1947.

Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986

The requirement for the NSSR is contained in Section 603 of Goldwater-Nichols but the text of a Senate report written prior to the final version of Goldwater Nichols reveals the purpose of the requirement, "The Committee believes that a report on national security strategy will provide an extremely useful framework for the work of authorizing

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[1] Don M. Snider, *The National Security Strategy: Documenting Strategic Vision, Second Edition,* Strategic Studies Institute (US Army War College, 1995) v.

[2] US Congress, House, Office of the Law Revision Counsel, U.S. Code 50 (2006), § 404a., http://uscode.house.gov/uscodecgi/fastweb.exe?getdoc+uscview+t49t50+1585+30++%28national%20security%20strategy%29%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20 (accessed January 8, 2008).

committees dealing with national defense and foreign policy."[3] This statement provides background on both the primary audience and the major purpose of the NSSR. The chief audiences of the NSSR are the authorizing committees who apportion funds with respect to national defense and foreign policy. According to the report on the draft bill, the Senate Armed Services Committee, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the House Armed Services Committee, and the House Foreign Affairs Committee are identified as the foremost audiences of the NSSR.[4]

> Currently, these committees lack a comprehensive context in which to evaluate the authorization requests and policy recommendations of the Administration. Moreover, the absence of a clear statement of national security strategy denies the Congress the opportunity to participate in the setting of policies and objectives for national defense.[5]

Here the committee delineates several purposes of the NSSR—*to provide an extremely useful framework for the work* of these committees, to provide context to evaluate an administration's budget and policy recommendations, and to present a clear national strategy that enhances Congress' participation in policy formulation. Thus far, the only audiences of the NSSR, as identified by the Senate report on Goldwater-Nichols, are the members of the U.S. Congress. However, the last paragraph of the report reveals a broader, more diverse audience.

> A comprehensive national security strategy also includes diplomatic and political components, including arms control initiatives, economic components covering trade, international investment, and technology transfer controls; international economic and security assistance programs, and information programs designed to promote international awareness of key events and American policies.[6]

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[3] Senate Committee on the Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, 99th Congress, 1986, S. Rep 99-280, http://www.ndu.edu/library/goldnich/goldnich.html (accessed January 8, 2008), 73.

[4] Ibid., 72-73.

[5] Ibid., 73.

[6] Ibid.

By prescribing the inclusion of diplomatic, political, arms control, economic trade, international investment, technology transfer controls, international assistance, and information components, the Senate committee implies that the NSSR's audience would expand substantially beyond the political representatives in the U.S. Congress. The goals, objectives, and interests in the NSSR are crucial to both national and international political leaders, government departments and agencies, private industry, trade organizations, media corporations, and aid organizations. The several parties mentioned here is not an exhaustive list, but are a few examples of the NSSR's global audience. Although this audience is clearly broad, including domestic and international viewers, the language in the final sentence of the report attributes the most important purpose of the NSSR is that, "the work of Congress would be more effective if it received a coordinated, comprehensive description of the role of these various components in the national security strategy of the United States."[7] Knowing the audience and the purpose, as prescribed by the congressional leaders who wrote the amendment, is helpful in determining what the NSSR should include and also what it should exclude. Although a study of Goldwater-Nichols is very useful for determining the audience and purpose, any conclusions must be compared with the law in its final amended form—Title 50 U.S. Code, section 404a.

Current U.S. Law

The law in its amended form contains the provisions of Goldwater-Nichols and designates certain sections which the president's NSSR must include. First, the law requires the NSSR to describe the worldwide interests, goals, and objectives that are vital

[7] Ibid.

to national security. Second, it must contain the foreign policy and defense capabilities to deter aggression and implement the national security strategy (NSS). Third, it must describe the short-term and long-term uses of the elements of national power to protect or promote the [vital] interests and achieve the goals and objectives. Fourth, the NSSR must address the adequacy of U.S. capabilities to carry out the NSS and evaluate the balance of the elements of national power. Finally, it contains a "catch-all" phrase to address, "other information as may be necessary to help inform Congress on matters relating to the national security strategy."[8] The vernacular in paragraph (b)(5) of the statute confirms both the primary purpose and the main audience of the NSSR—to *inform Congress*.[9] The U.S. Congress is the main audience, and the purpose of the report is to inform them of all matters pertaining to the national security strategy. What Congress achieved by this law was a mandate for the President to annually articulate the short and long-term strategy for integrating the resources necessary to achieve the objectives that provide for the security of the nation.

The former director of the Political-Military Studies at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Dr. Don Snyder, addresses the reason Congress legislated this solution to a significant problem in the governmental process:

> …an inability within the executive branch to formulate, in an coherent and integrated manner, judiciously using resources drawn from all elements of national power, the mid- and long-term strategy necessary to defend and further those interests vital to the nation's security.[10]

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[8] US Congress, House, Office of the Law Revision Counsel, U.S. Code 50 (2006), § 404a., http://uscode.house.gov/uscodecgi/fastweb.exe?getdoc+uscview+t49t50+1585+30++%28national%20security%20strategy%29%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%, (accessed January 8, 2008). The author inserts vital in the paragraph to describe the interests because paragraph (b)(3) of the statute refers to the interests, goals, and objectives in paragraph (b)(1) which requires a description of the interests, goals, and objectives that are vital to national security.

[9] Ibid.

Leading up to Goldwater-Nichols had been nearly a half-century of a U.S. grand strategy centered on containment. Snyder argued that although the nation had followed a strategy, "What they doubted, or disagreed with, was its focus in terms of values, interests and objectives; its coherence in terms of relating means to ends; its integration in terms of the elements of national power; and its time horizon."[11]

Even before the National Security Act of 1947, presidents had created national level strategies in various forms, yet there was no requirement to analyze or integrate the elements of national power capable of protecting the vital interests and goals of the country. Another theory at the time, according to Dr. Snyder, was that a clearly written national security strategy would "serve to inform the Congress better on the needs for resources to execute the strategy, thus facilitating the annual authorization and appropriation processes, particularly for the Department of Defense."[12]

Chapter Summary

The reasons for the NSSR presented by the Goldwater-Nichols Act are to provide a framework for the work of the Congressional authorizing committees on national defense and foreign policy, to assist the Congressional participation in the setting of policies and objectives for national defense, and to provide a comprehensive description of all of the components of national power and influence. The purposes and requirements of the NSSR prescribed by the law as amended are listed in Table 1.1. Although the primary audience of the NSSR is the Congress, the tone and contents of the strategies

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[10] Snyder, 2.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

often reflect a vast international audience. As the nation's interests have become increasingly more worldwide in nature, the NSSRs have included a vast array of priorities, goals, and objectives, lessening the clarity of what is most important and increasing the difficulty of understanding the interests over which the nation's leaders will employ military forces.

Table 1.1.: NSS Purposes and Requirements

Annual National Security Strategy Report		
The NSSR shall include a comprehensive description of: • Worldwide interests, goals, and objectives *that are vital to national security* • Foreign policy, worldwide commitments, national defense capabilities *to deter aggression and to implement the NSS* • Proposed short-term, long-term uses of political, economic, military, and other elements of national power *to protect or promote the vital interests and achieve the goals and objectives*	• Adequacy of the capabilities of the US to carry out the NSS including an evaluation of the balance among all elements of national power • Such other information as necessary to help inform Congress on matters relating to the NSS	The NSSR shall be submitted: • Annually to Congress • On the same day as the President's budget submission • Within 150 days of a new president taking office • In both classified and unclassified forms

Source: Data from Title 50 U.S.C., § 404a.[13]

[13] US Congress, House, Office of the Law Revision Counsel, U.S. Code 50 (2006), § 404a., http://uscode.house.gov/uscodecgi/fastweb.exe?getdoc+uscview+t49t50+1585+30++%28national%20security%20strategy%29%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20 (accessed January 8, 2008).

CHAPTER 2: FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENTS

Though written constitutions may be violated in moments of passion or delusion, yet they furnish a text to which those who are watchful may again rally and recall the people. They fix, too, for the people the principles of their political creed.[1]

Thomas Jefferson, 1802

Chapter Introduction

The previous chapter describes the statutory requirements and contents of the NSSR and provides insights for understanding how its increasingly global audience shapes its content. Readers of the NSSRs in the post-Cold War era will recognize interests, goals, and objectives in various forms as determined by the presidents and their administrations. What interests, goals, and objectives should readers of the NSSR expect to observe with respect to national security? One might argue that the interests should be directly linked to the values, protections, and rights comprised in the documents foundational to the origin and evolution of the nation. This chapter analyzes the foundational documents to construct a timeless lens through which the NSSRs can be evaluated—a task in the next chapter of this paper. The documents most famously tied to these foundational principles are the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States, the Bill of Rights, additional amendments to the Constitution, and the Declaration of Independence. The President of the United States, and military officers alike, at the assumption of their duties, swear to defend the Constitution of the United States, so it is here that the analysis will begin.

[1] Thomas Jefferson, 1802, http://etext.virginia.edu/jefferson/quotations/jeff0900.htm Internet ME 10:325, (accessed January 14, 2008).

The Constitution of the United States

> We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.[2]

The Constitution's preamble describes five overarching national interests or objectives: to establish justice, to insure domestic tranquility, to promote the general welfare, to provide for the common defense, and to secure the blessings of liberty. The articles of the Constitution reinforce by describing the principles of government, the fundamental laws of the nation, and the responsibilities of its leaders. The Constitution assigns the protection of these interests as responsibilities of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. This section of the paper links the principles of government and laws from the Constitution's articles to one or more of the primary interests in the preamble, beginning with the establishment of justice.

A review of the articles of the Constitution reveals two elements that serve as a foundation for the establishment of justice: the hierarchy of judicial courts and the right to trial by jury.[3] In addition to supporting the establishment of justice, the formal judicial system also enhances domestic tranquility.

Domestic tranquility is supported also by three structures that help maintain a society ruled by law. The first structure is the authority of the Congress, specifically its legislative powers.[4] The representation of the people from each state to the House of Representatives and the Senate is the second structure in the Constitution that supports

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[2] U.S. Constitution, Preamble.

[3] U.S. Constitution, art. 3, sec 1, cl. 1; U.S. Constitution, art. 3, sec. 2. cl. 3.

[4] U.S. Constitution, art. 1, sec 1, cl. 1.

domestic tranquility.[5] The last structure supporting a lawful society is the system of representation replicated in the state legislatures.[6] In this system, the Constitution guarantees a Republican form of government to each of the states. In additional to personal freedoms, the Constitution describes the apparatus that serves to protect the collective freedom of the nation from external threats.

Committed to a common defense, the Constitution authorizes the President, with the approval of two-thirds of the Congress, to make treaties.[7] Article two, section two designates the President as the commander-in-chief of the nation's military.[8] The Congress is authorized to raise and support armies and a navy, to call forth the militia to suppress insurrections and repeal invasions, to declare war, and to protect the states against invasion and domestic violence.[9] The legacy of the armies and the navy presently is the active duty component of the armed forces—Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard; the modern day remnant of the militia is the National Guard and Reserve components. It is possible to associate the armed forces with the next interest—securing the blessings of liberty. However, the Constitution also prescribes protections for individuals in ways different than the physical security of the nation.

The blessings of freedom are protected by the rights, prohibitions, and the form of government with its division of power between the President, the Congress, and the Supreme Court. Another element of freedom is the right to elect the President and the

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[5] U.S. Constitution, art. 1, sec 2, cl. 1.

[6] U.S. Constitution, art. 4, sec 4, cl. 1.

[7] U.S. Constitution, art. 2, sec 2, cl. 2.

[8] U.S. Constitution, art. 2, sec 2, cl. 1.

[9] U.S. Constitution, art. 1, sec 8, cl. 11 & cl. 12.

members of Congress.[10] The Constitution also requires the Congress to establish a uniform rule of naturalization to extend the full blessings of liberty to legal immigrants.[11]

The U.S. Constitution, preamble and article 1, section 8 provide the Congress with several means to promote the general welfare of the U.S. including the power to lay and collect taxes, to pay the debts, and to borrow money on behalf of the nation. [12] Other specific responsibilities of the Congress are to regulate commerce with foreign nations, to promote the progress of science and useful arts, and to coin money and regulate its value.[13] Table 2.1. on the following page serves two purposes. First, it records the foundational interests, rights, responsibilities, or values that underpin each of the five overarching interests or goals outlined in the Constitution's preamble. Second, it denotes which branch or branches of government the Constitution gives authority to or responsibility for the conduct of these underpinnings. With an understanding of these foundational interests, the next two sections underscore additional rights, values, and freedoms that also contribute to bedrock of liberties enjoyed by American citizens during its history and today.

The Bill of Rights

A careful study of these amendments reveals that the rights also serve to underpin the overarching interests in the Constitution's preamble. Table 2.2. presents each of these rights and one or more links to the overarching interests in the preamble of the

[10] U.S. Constitution, art. 1, sec 2, cl. 1; U.S. Constitution, art. 2, sec 1, cl. 1-4.

[11] U.S. Constitution, art. 1, sec 8, cl. 4.

[12] U.S. Constitution, art. 1, sec 8, cl. 1-2.

[13] U.S. Constitution, art. 1, sec 8, cl. 3, 5 ,8.

Constitution. The Congress which convened in March of 1789 drafted the first ten amendments, nearly two years after writing the Constitution. Unlike amendments eleven

Table 2.1.: Overarching Goals and Underpinnings in the U.S. Constitution

Authority or responsibility denoted: (E) = Executive (J) = Judicial (L) = Legislature	**Justice** • Judicial courts (J) • Trial by jury (J) • Rule of law (E, J, L)	**Domestic Tranquility** • Legislative powers (L) • Rule of law (E, J, L) • Represent the people (E, L) • Republican state govts (L)
General Welfare • Revenue from taxes (L) • Regulate foreign trade (L) • Progress of science/art (L) • Pay debts (L) • Borrow money (L) • Laws executed (E)	**Common Defense** • Raise/support armies (L) • Command armies/militia (E) • Call militia to repel attack (L) • Make treaties (E, L) • Declare war (L)	**Blessings of Liberty** • No titles of nobility (L) • Naturalization (L) • Checks/balances (E, J, L) • Free elections (E, J, L)

Source: U.S. Constitution.

through twenty-seven, the first ten amendments to the Constitution were ratified together at one time.[14] These amendments were adopted, "in order to prevent misconstruction or abuse of its powers, that further declaratory and restrictive clauses should be added: And as extending the ground of public confidence in the Government, will best ensure the beneficent ends of its institution."[15]

Constitutional Amendments XI-XXVII

The next seventeen amendments to the U.S. Constitution were drafted and ratified over a period of nearly 200 years.[16] Certain parts of these amendments may be linked to

[14] Although independently voted on by the states over a two-year period, the first ten amendments were ratified December 15, 1791 and composed the "Bill of Rights."

[15] The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, The Bill of Rights: A Transcription, http://www.archives.gov, (accessed January 8, 2008).

the overarching interests and values discussed in the previous sections. Others do not fall neatly into distinct categories, as they describe procedures for appointments, elections, and terms of office for various government functions. With this basis, the author details the association of the appropriate section of each amendment with one or more of the overarching interests in the Constitution. These freedoms, underscored in Table 2.3, have not only become part of the fabric of U.S. society, but according to the research presented in the final chapter, U.S. presidents in the post-Cold War era have defended many of these freedoms in other nations in compliance with formal treaties and alliances.

[16] The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, The Constitution: Amendments 11-27, https://www.archives.gov, (accessed January 8, 2008). Amendment 11 was ratified 07 February 1795. Amendment 27 was ratified 07 May 1992.

Table 2.2.: Rights, Values, and Freedoms in Amendments I-X

Amendment	Rights, Values, or Freedoms	Link to Interest in Constitution
I	Exercise of religion	Blessings of liberty
	Free speech/free press	Blessings of liberty
	Peaceable assembly	Blessings of liberty
	Petition government for redress of grievances	Establish justice / Domestic tranquility
II	Well regulated militia	Common defence
	Keep and bear arms	Domestic tranquility / Common defence
III	Troops not quartered in any house	Domestic tranquility / Blessings of liberty
IV	No unreasonable search and seizures	Establish justice / Blessings of liberty
	No warrants without probably cause	Establish justice / Blessings of liberty
V	Requirement for grand jury indictment	Establish justice
	No double jeopardy	Establish justice / Domestic tranquility
	Not compelled to be a witness against oneself	Establish justice / Blessings of liberty
	Due process of law	Establish justice
	Private property protection	Blessings of liberty / Domestic tranquility
VI	Speedy and public trial by impartial jury	Establish justice
	Confront witnesses	Establish justice
	Right to counsel	Establish justice
VII	Common law right to jury trial in suits exceeding twenty dollars	Establish justice
VIII	No excessive bail/fines	Establish justice / General welfare
	No cruel or unusual punishment	Establish justice / Domestic tranquility
IX	Explicit rights do not deny other rights	General welfare / Blessings of liberty
X	Inexplicit rights reserved for states	General welfare / Blessings of liberty

Source: U.S. Constitution, Amendments 1-10.

Table 2.3.: Rights, Values, and Freedoms in Amendments XI – XXVII[17]

Amendment	Rights, Values or Freedoms	Link to Interest in Constitution
XI	Limits judicial power involving states or foreign states	Justice / Domestic tranquility
XII	Process for electors for the President	Liberty
XIII	Abolishes slavery	Equality/Liberty
XIV	Equal protection under the law for naturalized citizens Restricts office for insurrection/rebellion Validity of public debt	Equality Domestic Tranquility General welfare
XV	Right to vote not denied by color, race, or servitude	Equality / Liberty
XVI	Congressional right to collect income taxes	General welfare
XVII	Senate terms set at six years; process to fill vacancies	Domestic tranquility / Continuity of government
XIX	Right of women to vote	Equality / Liberty
XX	President, Vice President, and congressional term dates Succession to the Presidency	Domestic Tranquility Continuity of government
XXII	President limited to two terms with two year exception	Domestic tranquility
XXIII	District of Columbia entitlement to electors for President and Vice-president	Equality / Liberty
XXIV	Right to vote not predicated on poll or other taxes	Justice / Domestic tranquility / Liberty
XXV	Scenarios involving vacancy of President or Vice President	Domestic tranquility / Liberty
XXVI	Right to vote at age 18	Equality / Liberty
XXVII	No change in salaries for Congressional leaders in current term	Domestic tranquility

Source: U.S. Constitution, Amendments 11-27.

[17] The eighteenth and twenty-first amendments are not included in this table as the latter repealed the former.

The Declaration of Independence

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.[18]

The Declaration of Independence, 1776

A review of the Declaration of Independence is important in this survey of foundational documents, because it adds depth to the foundational values. This document was the first significant document produced by the Continental Congress, and many of its principles are the cornerstones for the rights and freedoms in the U.S. Constitution. The Declaration provides a broad description of the nation's first goals and objectives that were subsequently expanded upon in the U.S. Constitution.

The clear purpose of the Declaration of Independence, written in its final paragraph, was to affirm that the colonies were absolved from all allegiance to the British crown and that they had dissolved all political connections. The Declaration, in addition to its description of repeated harms wrought on the colonies by British rule, espouses the national interests, rights, and safeguards of the new government. These are contained in the following three areas of the Declaration: the descriptions of inseparable rights, the accounting of oppressions, and the many assertions of independence. A study of the Declaration reveals not only the reasons for the separation, but more importantly discloses the express function of the new government is, "…to secure these rights."[19]

A review of the Declaration reveals six main points: (1) a description of the necessity to dissolve the current political bands; (2) the advocacy of certain rights of all

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[18] The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, The Declaration of Independence, http://www.archives.gov, (accessed September 25, 2007).

[19] Ibid.

people and the need for their securing; (3) the privilege to alter or abolish a government that denies those rights; (4) a list of oppressions by the King and the British legislature; (5) the enumeration of several unsuccessful attempts by the colonies to resolve these grievances; (6) a declaration to be free and independent states, no longer subject to British rule.

The Declaration contains clear language describing its function to establish thirteen free and independent [from British rule and each other] yet united states: "it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and Nature's God entitle them."[20] This first decree established that the new government would be autonomous and sovereign among the other nations of the world. The course of human events which brought the colonies to such a point was described in the subsequent list of repeated injuries and usurpations.

The oppressions took the form of rights which the British Monarchy had denied to the colonies, and as a whole, took the form of absolute tyranny. The combined offenses had deprived the colonists of three primary rights: "…that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed"[21] The restoration and protection of these rights were the writers' main objectives, and to ensure the future safeguarding of such, they were establishing their own form of government: "…it is their

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.[22] In this statement, the writers declared the first national strategy and it was a strategy for security—that the government would provide for the security of certain indissoluble rights of the people. It is out of these core rights—life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—that all other rights emerged.

By examining the specific injuries under British rule, readers of the Declaration perhaps can discover the interests or values vital to the success and security of the new nation. Table 2.4. contains recorded injuries and the associated national interest or value.

Table 2.4.: Interests and Values from British Oppressions

Injuries/Oppressions	***Associated National Interest or Value***
Refused approval of laws for public good	Government responsive to the governed
Demanding relinquishment of right to representation as basis for passing laws	Right to representation
Dissolving the Representative Houses	Right to representation
Obstructing laws of naturalization of Foreigners	Lawful immigration
Refused lawful establishment of Judiciary powers	Unobstructed administration of justice
Made judges dependent on his will alone	Justice system free from executive dominance
Rendered the Military superior to civil power	Military subject to civilian leadership
Cutting off trade with the world	Right to free economic practices
Imposing taxes without consent	Right to representation
Depriving trial by jury	Right to trial by jury
Abolishing colonial laws, suspending Legislatures, and altering the form of Government	Government responsive to the governed
Plundered seas, ravaged coasts, burnt towns, destroyed lives	Right to life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness

Source: The Declaration of Independence.

[22] Ibid.

Following the enumeration of grievances, the writers describe their unsuccessful attempts for reasonable redress by repeatedly petitioning both the King of England and the British legislature.

> Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of free people.[23]

Clearly dissatisfied with the monarch's unlawful treatment of the colonies, the writers further recite that their continual complaints to their own British brethren have also been ignored:

> They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity...We must therefore…hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.

By addressing both branches of the British government, the members of the General Congress use precise wording to articulate that their fight is not only with the King but with the whole of the British government as well. These statements reconfirm a value which is also present in the opening paragraphs—that governments derive their just power from the consent of the governed. Highlighting the source of their own authority, the representatives profess that they are acting by the consent of the governed: "…do, in Name, and by Authority of the good People of the Colonies."[24]

In the final paragraph of the Declaration, the writers explicitly articulate several rights of the new government which were a culmination of their address and vital to the new nation's survival. First, the representatives declared that the colonies would be free and independent states—liberty. Second, they had full power to levy war, conclude peace, and contract alliances—sovereignty. Third, they had the right to establish

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[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid.

commerce—freedom of economic pursuits. Fourth, they declared that they had the right to act in all other ways which independent nation states do—autonomy. These rights laid the foundation for the overarching interests in the preamble of the Constitution. While the Declaration provides for these rights and freedoms in broad strokes, the Constitution assigns responsibilities for their safeguarding to one or more of the three specific branches of government.

Chapter Summary

This chapter demonstrated the unity of the foundational documents that shaped the U.S. from its inception until the present. The U.S. Constitution, its amendments, and the Declaration of Independence are in agreement with respect to the interests underpinning the American way of life and the government's role to protect those interests. The next chapter presents the interests, goals, and objectives contained in each of the post-Cold War NSSRs to show that although the national strategies are influenced by the original national interests, the vast array of worldwide interests, goals, and objectives causes a de-emphasis of the *vital* interests and *real* priorities. Hence, the operational planner is faced with a myriad of so-called vital, essential, and critical interests, and must learn how to break the code to determine where the president is likely to employ the U.S. military.

CHAPTER 3: THE NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGIES OF THE POST- COLD WAR ERA

The United States must build on opportunities achieved through the successful conclusion of the Cold War. Our long-term goal is a world in which each of the major powers is democratic, with many other nations joining the community of market democracies as well.[1]

President William J. Clinton, 1994

Chapter Introduction

In this chapter, the following methodology is used to present the author's analysis of the NSSRs of George H. W. Bush, William J. Clinton, and George W. Bush. First, the author presents the vital interests identified in the respective NSSR to draw attention to what that president deemed necessary to the survival of the nation. Second, the author presents the overarching goals, interests, and objectives to demonstrate the vast group of competing priorities at the grand strategic level of the U.S. Government. Next, the author shows the enormous amount of modifiers in each report that describe not only the overarching interests, goals, and objectives but are also used with little discrimination to describe a multitude of other interests and goals. Throughout each section, the author evaluates whether a particular NSSR is linked to the foundational interests from the documents analyzed in chapter two. The sum of this analysis points to an evolving national security strategy trend to remain rooted in the original interests from the foundational documents while also giving the appearance that the nation is committed to a near-limitless amount of competing objectives.

President George H. W. Bush

…for our values are the link between our past and our future, between our domestic life and our foreign policy, between our power and our purpose. It is our deepest belief that all nations and peoples seek political and economic freedom; that governments must rest

[1] President, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*, (July 1994), 17.

their rightful authority on the consent of the governed, and must live in peace with their neighbors.[2]

President George H. W. Bush, 1990

The first NSSR after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, was the first NSSR written by the Bush administration. In its first chapter, President Bush outlines the goals, interests, and objectives of the nation and describes the *overarching goals* as the broad goals that have guided American foreign and defense policy throughout the nation's history.

> We have always sought to protect the safety of the nation, its citizens, and its way of life. We have also worked to advance the welfare of our people by contributing to an international environment of peace, freedom, and progress within which our democracy—and other free nations—can flourish.[3]

Beyond these broad goals, the 1990 report identifies the following enduring elements of national strategy: (1) an American commitment to an alliance strategy, (2) a commitment to free trade and open international economic system, and (3) an ability to project American power to help preserve the international equilibrium in support of peace and security.[4] In support of the latter, the administration identifies the first of two vital interests as preventing any hostile power from dominating the Eurasian land mass.[5] The second and only other vital interest identified in the report was described as, "the freedom of the seas for all nations."[6] In addition to these two vital interests, the report makes reference to several priorities and primary goals as, "essential to our prosperity and

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[2] President, *National Security Strategy of the United States*, (March 1990), v.

[3] Ibid., 1.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid., 17.

security".[7] Among these additional goals and priorities was the importance of resolving trade disputes, ensuring secure supplies of energy, maintaining a balance of power with the Soviet Union, and the deterrence of nuclear attack. Additionally, the report's first chapter specifies nineteen objectives supporting the following four interests.

- The survival of the US as a free and independent nation, with its fundamental values intact and its institutions and people secure.
- A healthy and growing US economy to ensure opportunity for individual prosperity and a resource base for national endeavors at home and abroad.
- A stable and secure world, fostering political freedom, human rights, and democratic institutions.
- Healthy, cooperative and politically vigorous relations with allies and friendly nations.[8]

Despite the failure of the administration to use more direct language, these interests were most likely intended to represent the *most important* interests. These interests may be summarized as the survival of the nation, a robust U.S. economy, a secure world that promotes freedom and democracy, and strong relations with its allies.

The Bush administration published the 1991 NSSR after Operation Desert Storm liberated Kuwait from the Iraqi invasion. This report was very similar to its predecessor, and contains the same four overarching interests and objectives except for the following changes. First, the report reverses the placement of the third and fourth interests. This switch may not have implied any change in priority, since the Administration is silent on whether or not the interests were prioritized. Second, the total number of objectives increases from 19 to 21. Third, the description of *broad* interests and objectives in the

[7] Ibid., 22.

[8] Ibid., 2-3.

1990 report are changed to *basic* interests.[9] In addition to the vital interests of maintaining freedom of the seas and a stable Europe, the President identifies economic strength as vital to national interests, the professional skills of the armed forces as vital to the national security, and that the vital national interests depend on a stable and secure [Persian] Gulf. [10] In a fashion similar to the 1990 report, the 1991 report documents several additional areas that are crucial, paramount, or essential, yet never portrays them specifically as *vital* to the security of the nation. These near-vital interests and tasks are: maintaining regional balances before they erupt in military conflict, arms control, global reach of American intelligence capabilities, energy supplies, the ability to deploy substantial forces, and the safety and security of US nuclear weapons.[11]

The Bush administration published its final NSSR in January 1993, just weeks prior to President Clinton taking office.[12] Remarkably different in this report is the omission of any specific vital interests, although the administration notes, "Our basic national interests and objectives and the requirement for American leadership are still the same."[13] Although President Bush's first two NSSRs have near identical interests and goals to support those interests, this last report identifies five interests, and only the first interest remains similar to the previous reports. The basic premises of the interests are

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[9] President, *National Security Strategy of the United States*, (August 1991), 3-4.

[10] Ibid., 15, 19, 28, 31.

[11] Ibid., 5-26.

[12] The 1993 NSSR organized its main political, economic, and defense chapters under two primary headings, "What We Have Achieved" and "How We Can Lead." With a focus on many of the administration's legislative successes and foreign policy achievements, portions of this NSSR read more like a state of the union address or similar political speech, and less like a grand strategy. For additional research of this topic, see Lt Col Patrick McClellan's *The United States National Security Strategy: Grand Strategy or Propaganda?*

[13] President, *National Security Strategy of the United States*, (January 1993), 21.

similar, except for the last interest which seeks, "An enduring global faith in America – that it can and will lead in a collective response to the world's crises."[14] Akin to the previous reports, the 1993 report includes critical, top, and essential as hierarchical terms for some of its policy aims but omits the use of the phrases, "vital interest" or "vital to national security." The near-vital interests for the 1993 report are: helping the democratic community of nations continue to grow, the strengthening of economic performance at home and economic leadership abroad, the defense industrial base, the banning of chemical weapons, the development of a ballistic missile defense, and accurate and timely intelligence.[15]

Collectively, the clear tone of the 1993 NSSR is that the U.S. must encourage the spread of democracy around the world, and that these democratic nations need U.S. assistance in order to survive. The administration's rationale for this unifying vision involves looking to the past: "History teaches that representative governments responsive to their people are least likely to turn to aggression against their neighbors. Democracies also ensure individual civil and human rights, support economic freedom, and promote stability."[16] Similarly, in the preface of the 1993 NSSR, President Bush confirms that this theme is weaved throughout his previous strategies, "Our policy has one overriding goal: real peace – not the illusory and fragile peace maintained by a balance of terror, but an enduring peace based on shared values."[17] On the previous page of the report, he identifies the values as, "the values that define us as a nation – freedom, compassion,

[14] Ibid., 3.

[15] Ibid., 1-18.

[16] Ibid., 3.

[17] Ibid., ii.

justice, opportunity, the rule of law, and hope."[18] These values led to peace for years with the former adversaries of Japan and Germany, and President Bush's overriding policy goal is described as, "real peace…the peace and liberty we wish upon every region of the world, enabling free peoples and free economies everywhere to flourish and to prosper."[19] President Bush's goal was for the U.S. to lead the world toward the "Age of Democratic Peace," – a world of cooperation, not confrontation resulting in a community of nations "joined together by shared values."[20] Each of the NSSRs of the George H. W. Bush presidency clearly articulates that the U.S. must stretch beyond the responsibility to protect *its* citizens and interests to maintain a role of *international* leadership.

> As the world's most powerful democracy, we are inescapably the leader, the connecting link in a global alliance of democracies. The pivotal responsibility for ensuring the stability of the international balance remains ours[21]
>
> We must not only protect our citizens and interests, but help create a new world in which our fundamental values not only survive but flourish. We must work with others, but we must also be a leader.[22]
>
> The U.S. must continue to provide the leadership necessary to encourage and sustain cooperation among our allies, friends, and new partners in meeting the challenges that we will inevitably encounter in the future.[23]
>
> If we shun this role, our own future will be shaped by others.[24]

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[18] Ibid., i.

[19] Ibid., ii.

[20] Ibid., 21.

[21] President, *National Security Strategy of the United States*, (March 1990), 2.

[22] President, *National Security Strategy of the United States*, (August 1991), v.

[23] President, *National Security Strategy of the United States*, (January 1993), 13.

[24] Ibid., 2.

At first glance, President Bush appears to be promoting the U.S. as the world's policeman, responsible for ensuring the stability of the international balance. From this perspective, an operational planner might assume that stability in every nation and every region in the world is a priority. Perhaps to prevent this perception, the report states that the nation must reexamine how and if particular challenges threaten U.S. interests, and that the growing strength of friends and allies will allow the U.S. to be more selective in determining whether its military must be committed. How are readers of the NSSR to interpret this double meaning? Herein lays the crux of tension: first, the U.S. is responsible for the stability of the international balance; second, the U.S. must use its allies and friends to avoid always having to commit troops. Which takes greater precedence—ensuring the international stability or enlisting the support of U.S. friends and allies? If allies and friends are unwilling to share the burden of troop involvement in a particular situation, do the President's words that the U.S. is responsible for the stability of the international balance dictate U.S. military intervention? President Bush's competing precedents highlight a key piece of analysis that must be accomplished at the executive level—to determine if a particular situation threatens one or more U.S. interests, and if so, to ascertain the degree it is threatened.[25] In this lays the difficulty of determining whether or not the President will commit military forces when U.S. vital interests are not threatened directly.

[25] Ibid., 13.

President William J. Clinton

We also know that our engagement abroad rightly depends on the willingness of the American people and the Congress to bear the costs of defending U.S. interests—in dollars, energy, and, when there is no other alternative, American lives.[26]

A National Security Strategy for a New Century, 1997

This section investigates the seven NSSRs of President Clinton's two terms in office. It will reveal a tendency by the Clinton administration to change the vital interests in successive years, while remaining consistently tied to the overarching goals of the preamble in the U.S. Constitution. The Clinton administration published its first NSSR in 1994, more than seventeen months after taking office. The administration's foremost mission, as stated in the report's preface, was protecting the nation's security—the people, the territory, and the way of life. President Clinton outlined three primary goals remarkably similar to the interests from his predecessor's NSSRs:

- To sustain security with military forces ready to fight
- To bolster America's economic revitalization
- To promote democracy abroad[27]

The rationale for these goals was that secure nations would be more likely to support free trade and democracy, that nations with growing economies and good trade relationships would be more likely to feel secure and seek freedom, and that democratic states would be less likely to threaten her interests. The goals of this trilogy are summed up in the following paragraph of the report:

> Our national security is based on enlarging the community of market democracies while deterring and containing a range of threats to our nation, our allies, and our

[26] President, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, (May 1997), 3.

[27] President, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*, (July 1994), i-3.

> interests. The more that democracy and political and economic liberalization take hold in the world, particularly in countries of geostrategic importance to us, the safer our nation is likely to be and the more our people are likely to prosper.[28]

In pursuit of these goals, the report stresses that the end of the Cold War has not changed the original objectives of the Constitution as described in the preamble.[29] In the report's introduction, the writers acknowledge that the basic objectives of the country are, "to provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity."[30] Although not specifically describing these interests as vital to national security, the emphasis in the introduction of the report bears significance. Furthermore, the report outlines several additional values and interests linked to the foundational documents. Namely, these are freedom, equality, human dignity, democratic governance, market economies, and that foreign policy must serve the needs of the people.[31]

Like his predecessor, President Clinton uses terms such as central, critical, foremost, significant, most important, key, and core. He ascribes these adjectives to the following interests, priorities, and goals: environmental security, deficit reduction, military capabilities, intelligence capabilities, access to space, counter proliferation of nuclear weapons and other WMD, and assisting new democratic states. Moreover, this report only identifies two vital interests: unrestricted access to foreign sources of oil and stability in Europe.[32]

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[28] Ibid., ii.

[29] For a discussion of national interests in the U.S. Constitution, see chapter 1 of this paper.

[30] President, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*, (July 1994), 2.

[31] President, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*, (July 1994), ii.

[32] Ibid., 17, 25.

An example of competing priorities are the counter-proliferation of nuclear weapons and other WMD—"a key part of our strategy,"[33] and promoting American prosperity—"a central goal of our national security strategy."[34] Critics of the strategy could argue that there is no distinction in priority between *key* or *central*. Two fictitious scenarios requiring further clarification of priorities illustrates this tension: (1) insurgents committing conventional attacks on foreign industrial centers in which the U.S. has major financial interests; (2) a third-world nation's leadership is using chemical weapons against a neighboring country. Does each of these situations comprise a trigger to employ U.S. military assets? Extensive additional information is required to fully describe the situation. However, the point is argued that confusion exists as to the *real* priority of these stated elements of national strategy.

A study of President Clinton's 1995 NSSR reveals that his administration's strategy remains essentially unchanged with respect to the *foremost* mission, the three primary goals, identifying the nation's vital interests, and describing the respective objectives and priorities.[35] The 1996 NSSR contains several major revisions. First, the administration adds "with effective representation abroad" to the first goal, thereby emphasizing the importance of employing diplomacy in concert with military operations.[36] Second, the report identifies that organized crime in the new independent states of the former Soviet Union poses a direct threat to U.S. interests due to the

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[33] Ibid., 11.

[34] Ibid., 15.

[35] President, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*, (February 1995).

[36] President, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*, (February 1996), i.

potential for stolen nuclear materials.[37] Third, the threat of intrusions to both commercial and military information systems comprises a significant threat to national security.[38] Lastly, comprehensive, all-hazard emergency preparedness planning by all federal departments and agencies was decidedly a *crucial* national security requirement.[39]

President Clinton published the 1997 NSSR, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century,* several months after taking office for his second term. Although the three primary goals—defense and diplomacy, economic prosperity, and the promotion of democracy abroad—remain, the administration introduces six strategic priorities essential to keeping America strong, secure, and prosperous.[40]

- Foster a peaceful, undivided, democratic Europe
- Forge a strong and stable Asia Pacific community
- America must prosper in a global economy
- Continue to be an unrelenting force for peace globally
- Increase cooperation in confronting transnational security threats
- Maintain the diplomatic and military tools to meet the challenges[41]

For the first time, the administration identifies American leadership and engagement in the world as vital to national security. The incorporation of Russia, Ukraine, and other Newly Independent States (NIS) into the world community is also a

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[37] Ibid., 25.

[38] Ibid., 13.

[39] Ibid., 26.

[40] The strategic priorities were first outlined in President Clinton's 1997 State of the Union Address.

[41] President. *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, (May 1997), i-iii, 2.

new vital national security interest.[42] The report connotes that the following environmental issues can affect the national security interest of protecting its citizens: climate change, ozone depletion, and transnational shipments of dangerous materials.[43] Additionally, uninhibited access to space was deemed essential to national security, whereas it was merely critical in the previous reports.[44]

The first significant change to the 1998 NSSR from the previous year is a reduction of the six strategic priorities to four. These are the strategic priorities that remained:

- Foster regional efforts led by the community of democratic nations to promote peace and prosperity in key regions of the world
- Increase cooperation in confronting new security threats that defy borders
- Strengthen military, diplomatic and law enforcement tools to meet the challenges
- Create more jobs and opportunities for through a more competitive economic system[45]

The trio of security, prosperity, and democracy continued as the core objectives of the strategy. The number of vital interests of the previous Clinton strategies expands to include international law enforcement cooperation. Additionally, there are several other "clear, vital interests" in Europe, East Asia, and Southwest Asia which are not specified.[46]

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[42] Ibid., 22.

[43] Ibid., 11.

[44] Ibid., 14.

[45] President, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, (October 1998), 2.

[46] Ibid., 12.

Once again, de-emphasis of the *important* interests is caused by specifying a large number of interests, objectives, goals, and programs in the strategy as essential (19), crucial (7), critical (22), and central (7) to our national security or national interests.[47] Other interests and goals are portrayed as important (38), enormously important, a priority (7), a high priority, the highest priority (4), or the cornerstone by the administration. Still other actions, elements, or steps of the strategy are identified as steps that we *must* take, or that we *are committed to*, or are *clearly in our strategic interest*.

In the 1999 NSSR, the administration modifies the strategy's third primary objective of promoting democracy abroad to read, "To promote democracy *and human rights* abroad."[48] Whereas the previous report states, "Each nation must find its own form of democracy, and we respect the variety of democratic institutions that have emerged," the administration noted that simply having free elections was not a sufficient form of democracy and underscored a list of values necessary for democracies to survive.[49] The values which the administration identifies are similarly expressed in the U.S. Constitution and the Declaration of Independence.

> Genuine, lasting democracy also requires respect for human rights, including the right to political dissent; freedom of religion and belief; an independent media capable of engaging an informed citizenry; a robust civil society; the rule of law and an independent judiciary; open and competitive economic structures; mechanisms to safeguard minorities from oppressive rule by the majority; full respect for women's and worker's rights; and civilian control of the military.[50]

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[47] Numbers in parentheses denote total separate occurrences of each phrase in the report.

[48] President, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, (December 1999), iii.

[49] President, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, (October 1998), 47; President, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, (December 1999), 25.

[50] President, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, (December 1999), 25.

The administration no longer recorded the following interests as vital: American leadership and engagement in the world, international law enforcement cooperation, and the incorporation of the NIS into market economies and the world community. However, it stipulates that access to and the use of space is a vital interest.[51]

Further blurring the lines between competing priorities, the 1999 report continues the trend of describing a significant amount of interests as vital (8), the vital link, increasingly vital, important (31), most relevant, critical (22), centerpiece, cornerstone, key (30), highest priority, essential (14), enduring, principal, profound, fundamental, strategic (12), strategic importance, and abiding.[52] Also contributing to de-emphasis among the report's priorities was the placement of the president's strategic priorities, which were previously in the first few pages of the two previous reports. Instead, the only mention of these strategic priorities is in the one-page conclusion of the 1999 report. Furthermore, the list of priorities was modified again, signaling that these *priorities* had changed for three consecutive years:

- Efforts to promote peace and security in key regions
- To create more economic opportunities for Americans
- To increase cooperation in confronting security threats that defy borders
- To strengthen international arms control and nonproliferation regimes
- To protect the environment and the health of citizens
- To strengthen the intelligence, military, diplomatic and law enforcement tools to meet the challenges[53]

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[51] Ibid., 12.

[52] Numbers in parentheses denote total separate occurrences of each phrase in the report.

[53] President, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, (December 1999), 49.

President Clinton's 2000 NSSR was published just one month before his administration would leave office. Identical to each of his previous reports, the preamble to the Constitution provides the basis for the report's three primary goals: enhancing security, promoting prosperity, and promoting democracy and human rights.[54] However, once again the report outlines a new set of elements for the strategy.[55] The interests vital to the security of the nation are expanded to include protection against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD).[56] The administration also expands the number of interests, efforts, and programs attributed as: vital (2), increasingly vital, a national interest (2), a strategic interest, a priority (3), a high priority, the highest priority (2), the top priority (2), the top national security priority (2), core, crucial, critical (8), most critical, key (4), essential (6), cornerstone, important (2), particularly important, growing importance, never been more important, incumbent, we are committed to (3), we must be prepared to, will be required to, strongly support, must (8), will, inextricably linked, imperative, and incumbent.[57]

This concise study of President Clinton's NSSRs reveals that the *vital* interests, goals, and objectives often changed from year to year, but that the *broad* strategic interests of enhancing security, promoting prosperity, and promoting democracy were relatively constant. Like his predecessor, President Clinton's strategies greatly overused words such as vital, crucial, and essential when describing objectives, elements of the

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[54] President, *A National Security Strategy for a Global Age*, (December 2000), 1.

[55] The elements of the strategy as outlined on page 3 of the 2000 NSSR were adapting alliances; encouraging the reorientation of other states; encouraging democratization, free markets, free trade; preventing conflict; countering regional aggressors; confronting new threats; and steering international peace and stability operations.

[56] President, *A National Security Strategy for a Global Age*, (December 2000), 4.

[57] Numbers in parentheses denote total separate occurrences of each phrase in the report.

strategy, and goals—creating an enormous collection of interests, goals, and objectives that appear to stand on equal ground with the vital interests.

President George W. Bush

Freedom is the non-negotiable demand of human dignity; the birthright of every person—in every civilization. Throughout history, freedom has been threatened by war and terror; it has been challenged by the clashing wills of powerful states and the evil designs of tyrants…Today, humanity holds in its hands the opportunity to further freedom's triumph over all these foes. The United States welcomes our responsibility to lead in this great mission.[58]

President George W. Bush, 2002

This section will complete the survey of the national security strategies since the end of the Cold War. There are only two NSSRs thus far in the Bush presidency spanning nearly eight years in office. In the 2002 NSSR, George W. Bush outlines nine major strategies to help the U.S. accomplish his administration's goals of: political and economic freedom, peaceful relations with other states, and respect for human dignity. These goals comprise the heart of an international strategy that states the U.S. will:

- Champion aspirations for human dignity
- Strengthen alliances to defeat global terrorism
- Work with others to defuse regional conflicts
- Prevent our enemies from threatening us, our allies, and our friends with WMD
- Ignite a new era of global economic growth through free markets and free trade
- Expand the circle of development by opening societies and building the infrastructure of democracy
- Develop agendas for cooperative action with other main centers of global power
- Transform America's national security institutions to meet the challenges and opportunities of the twenty-first century[59]

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[58] President, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, (September 2002), preface.

[59] Ibid., 3-4.

His report also includes several values that emanate from U.S. historical documents. According to President Bush in the preface to the 2002 report, "…to speak freely; choose who will govern them; worship as they please; educate their children—male and female; own property; and enjoy the benefits of their labor. These values of freedom are right and true for every person, in every society." [60] Added to this list of values, he maintains that protecting these values is the common calling of freedom-loving people across the globe and across the ages. Despite identifying the common cause of protecting our national values, the NSSR only identifies one interest vital to U.S. national security—strong economic growth in Europe and Japan.[61] However, in the preamble, President Bush admits that defending the nation against its enemies is the first commitment of the federal government.[62]

Like the other post-Cold War NSSRs, the Bush administration describes many of the interests, priorities, and objectives with phrases such as: our first imperative, moral imperative, moral principle, moral obligation, priority (2), strategic priority, global priority, military's highest priority, important priority, most important priority, top priority (2), particularly important, core value, key, focus (8), strategic principles, critical (2), crucial, U.S. interests, common interest, and global security commitments.[63]

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[60] Ibid., i.

[61] Ibid., 18.

[62] Each of the three presidents outlined in some manner the primary duties, goals, or objectives of the government as protecting the nation, its citizens, and the physical defense of the territory. Although, these were not specifically stated in every NSSR as *vital* national security interests, the author includes these in the Table 3.1. at the end of the chapter.

[63] President, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, (September 2002).

In the 2006 NSSR, President Bush again highlights that the first obligation of the government is to protect the security of the American people and American interests. He summarizes two priorities that have guided American policy for four years—fighting and winning the war on terror and promoting freedom as an alternative to tyranny and despair.[64] The three main goals of the administration are revised into two pillars: 1) promoting freedom, justice, and human dignity working to end tyranny, to promote effective democracies, and to extend prosperity; and 2) confronting the challenges by leading a growing community of democracies.[65] The goals and pillars are to support the eight overarching tasks replicated from the 2002 NSSR with the additional task of, "Engaging the opportunities and confronting the challenges of globalization."[66]

The 2006 NSSR identifies several objectives as vital, but avoids designating any specific interest as vital or vital to national security. Several geographic regions are recognized as "regions of vital interest"—the broader Middle East, South and Central Asia, and East Asia. The fight against terrorism and success in Afghanistan and Iraq is deemed vital. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is labeled as a vital pillar of U.S. foreign policy. The 22 separate organizations of the Department of Homeland Security are described as playing vital roles for the nation's protection.[67]

In addition to these assumed vital interests, the 2006 NSSR was not immune to the growing post-Cold War trend of describing the objectives and interests not as *vital* but as essential, a bedrock tenet of American foreign policy, a moral imperative, our priority,

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[64] President, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, (March 2006), i, 18.

[65] Ibid., ii.

[66] Ibid., iii.

[67] Ibid., 11,12, 38, 39, 43.

another priority, a strategic priority (2), a high priority, an enduring priority, national interests, central to our national security strategy, of geo-strategic importance, of great strategic importance, extensive interests, priorities at home, priorities abroad, and "even more vital."[68] An additional area about which the Bush administration is gravely concerned is the proliferation of nuclear weapons, which the 2006 report names as the greatest threat to national security.[69]

This section studied the NSSRs of the George W. Bush administration. Noticeably different from previous administrations is the failure by the Bush Administration to submit a NSSR every year, every other year, or even every three years. Just two NSSRs span his two presidential terms now into its eighth year in office. One result is that the main goals of the Bush strategy have remained constant, at least on paper, for the majority of his presidency.[70] Noticeably similar to previous administrations, the Bush NSSRs extensively used phrases such as priority, critical, and crucial adding difficulty to the task of identifying his *real* priorities for employing military forces. A counterargument might report that these priorities are probably contained in the classified version of the NSSR. After all, the president is required by law to submit both an unclassified version and a classified version. Certainly, the president would be more apt to lay out the real priorities in a document not available to

[68] Ibid., 1, 19, 23, 25, 27, 31, 32, 35, 37, 44, 45, 48. Numbers in parentheses denote total separate occurrences of each phrase in the report.

[69] Ibid., 19.

[70] A study of President George W. Bush's speeches and writings during the years without a NSSR submission would likely demonstrate changes to his goals and objectives due to the changing international landscape. The author excluded President Bush's political speeches or writings.

the public, competitors, or enemies. According to a high ranking military officer on the Joint Staff at the Pentagon, no classified version of the NSSR exists.[71]

Chapter Summary

This chapter identified the vital interests contained in the NSSRs of the three U.S. presidents in the post-Cold War era. These vital interests changed from year to year and included *survival* interests such as the physical defense of the nation's territory and citizens, and protection from WMD; and *indirect* interests such as a stable Europe, integrating Russia into the world market, strong relationships with allies, and access to space. The chapter underscored that these national strategies contain links to the nation's underpinnings in the foundational documents and that their broad goals have remained relatively similar. However, the post-Cold War NSSRs contain an evolving argument that the exportation of democracy and free markets are critical to the security of the U.S. and international stability. The analysis further revealed that there are many competing objectives, goals, and interests making it difficult to discern the real priorities of the national strategy. Furthermore, the overuse of terms, such as vital, essential, crucial, and priority—to name only a few— not only lessens the distinction of a *priority* from a *goal*, but the lack of prioritization among the stated priorities in every report adds confusion when trying to determine what is really important and what has been included for the political satisfaction of the domestic or international audience.

An opposing view might contend that operational planners receive the real priorities for employing military forces in the classified document, *Guidance for Employment of the Force (GEF).* The GEF, however, does not address every situation in

[71] In an e-mail message to the author, January 18, 2008. This source was confidential; name withheld by mutual agreement.

every region of the world. The author proposes that those situations in the world not addressed by the GEF, and hence, flying below the national radar, should concern the operational planner. As the old adage goes, “If everyone is thinking alike, no one is thinking.” In other words, operational planners should identify other potential areas of conflict not dictated to them by the GEF or the combatant commander.

The next chapter’s first two sections further discuss similarities and differences among the strategies, and its final section discusses the key ingredient which what they have omitted altogether, ranked priorities.

Table 3.1: Vital Interests in the NSSRs of the Post-Cold War Era

George H. W. Bush		William J. Clinton						George W. Bush	
1990	**1991,1993**	**1994**	**1995, 1996**	**1997**	**1998**	**1999**	**2000**	**2002**	**2006**
Freedom of the seas	Freedom of the seas								
	Stable Persian Gulf	Access to foreign oil	Access to foreign oil	Access to foreign oil	Access to foreign oil	Access to foreign oil	Access to foreign oil		The broader Middle East
No hostile power dominate Eurasia	No hostile power dominate Eurasia	Stable Europe	Stable Europe	Stable Europe	Stable Europe	Stable Europe	Stable Europe	Strong economic growth in Europe and Japan	South, Central, and East Asia
				American leadership and engagement in the world	American leadership and engagement in the world				
		Protect the people, territory, way of life	Defense of our territory	Physical security of our/our allies territory	Physical security of our/our allies territory	Physical security of our/our allies territory	Physical security of our/our allies territory		Protect American people and interests
	Skills of the armed forces		Defense of our citizens and allies	Safety of citizens	Safety of citizens	Safety of citizens	Safety of citizens at home/abroad	Defending Nation against its enemies	
	Economic strength		Economic well-being	Economic well-being of our society	Economic well-being of our society	Economic well-being of our society	Economic well-being of our society		
					Protection of critical infrastructures[1]	Protection of critical infrastructures	Protection of critical infrastructures		Department of Homeland Security
					International law enforcement cooperation				
				Evolution of Russia, Ukraine, other NIS into stable democracies and integrated into market economy/ world community	Integrate Russia, Ukraine and other NIS into market economy/ world community				
					Durable relationships with friends & allies				NATO
						Unimpeded access to and use of space	Access to and use of space		
							Protection against WMD proliferation		The fight against terrorism

Source: Data from National Security Strategy Reports of 1990, 1991, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2002, 2006.

[1] Examples of critical infrastructures include banking and finance, energy, telecommunications, transportation, water systems, vital human services, and government services.

CHAPTER 4: ENDURING ELEMENTS OF NATIONAL STRATEGY

The very success of containment has created new conditions and opportunities for a new generation of Americans. We welcome this change. Yet our basic values—and our basic geopolitical necessities—remain. As the world's most powerful democracy, we are inescapably the leader, the connecting link in a global alliance of democracies.[1]

President George H. W. Bush

Chapter Introduction

The previous chapter focused on the diversity of vital interests and the continuous changes to the major objectives, goals, and interests in the NSSRs not only between administrations, but from report to report during the same administration. This chapter first highlights the similarities of the twelve NSSRs studied in the previous chapter, which might give the perception that the resemblances will be present in future strategies. In reality, there is no guarantee that each of these elements, although common since the end of the Cold War, will persist beyond the end of the current administration. The next section of this chapter details some of the differences among the strategies and addresses some merits and criticisms in providing coherent guidance to the operational planner. The last section of this chapter notes a key area which the strategies exclude and discusses several implications for audiences of the NSSR.

What They're All Saying Alike

This section details similarities in the reports with respect to vital interests, overarching themes, and links to the values and interests contained in the historical documents. From the study of the twelve NSSRs, several similarities can be seen among the vital interests and the major themes.

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[1] President, *National Security Strategy of the United States*, (March 1990), 2.

Access to Foreign Oil

One of the vital interests represented most, occurring in eleven of the twelve reports is access to foreign oil sources, which was also identified as a stable Persian Gulf region. The only report not identifying this as a vital interest, the Bush 1990 report, did express secure energy supplies as *essential* to security and prosperity.[2] In 1999, the U.S. Commission on National Security/21st Century in its Phase I Report concluded that energy will continue to have a major strategic significance for the for the next quarter century.

> Demand for fossil fuel will increase as major developing economies grow, increasing most rapidly in Asia. American dependence on foreign sources of energy will also grow over the next two decades. In the absence of events that alter significantly the price of oil, the stability of the world oil market will continue to depend on an uninterrupted supply of oil from the Persian Gulf, and the location of all key fossil fuel deposits will retain geopolitical significance.[3]

The paralyzing dependence on foreign oil is not restricted to the US economy only, but also affects the economies of its allies and friends. Research supporting the commission's report highlighted this vulnerability to hatchling economies:

> A major disruption in global energy markets could also have a profound impact on economic growth and integration worldwide. The availability of abundant cheap oil from the Persian Gulf has been the major contributor to the sustained low prices of the past decade. If this supply is somehow threatened or limited, then growth in developing countries could be stymied. Many regimes in the developing world might not survive the economic shocks resulting from an unstable oil market. [4]

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[2] Ibid., 22

[3] US Commission on National Security/21st Century, New World Coming, American Security in the 21st Century, September 15, 1999, http://www.fas.org/man/docs/nwc/nwc.htm,(accessed December 15, 2007), 5.

[4] US Commission on National Security/21st Century, New World Coming: American Security in the 21st Century, Supporting Research and Analysis, September 15, 1999, http://www.fas.org/man/docs/nwc/NWR_A.pdf, (accessed December 16, 2007), 27.

Although the United States is developing alternate energy sources and technologies, US commitments to allies and partners without equivalent resources will likely dictate that stability in the Persian Gulf region will remain a vital U.S. interest for the foreseeable future.

Stability in Europe

Another vital interest common to eleven of the twelve reports is European stability. The one exception was the Bush 2006 report. Although that report failed to mention Europe as a vital interest, it did underline the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as vital to US foreign policy.[5] A very strong indicator of Europe's continued importance to the U.S. is the number of treaties or agreements in force with European nations and international governmental organizations (IGOs). The *2007 Treaties in Force* report by the U.S. Department of State contains at least one bilateral treaty or other agreement on record with 110 European nations, territories, and IGOs.[6]

Economic Strength

Economic well being or strength is a vital interest represented in nine of the twelve reports. The Bush 2002 and 2006 NSSRs both stop short of classifying economic strength as a vital interest, though President Bush emphasizes the importance of economics to the national strategy:

> History has judged the market economy as the single most effective economic system and the greatest antidote to poverty. To expand economic liberty and prosperity, the United States promotes free and fair trade, open markets, a stable

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[5] President, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, (March 2006), 38.

[6] U.S. Department of State, *Treaties in Force 2007, November 1, 2007, Part 1*, http://www.state.gov/s/l/treaty/treaties/2007/section1/index.htm, (accessed March 29, 2008), 2-313.

> financial system, the integration of the global economy, and secure, clean energy development.[7]

In fact, one of President Bush's nine essential tasks is directly tied to economic strength: "Ignite a new era of global economic growth through free markets and free trade."[8] This is an echo of what his father, President George H. W. Bush, outlined as an enduring element of national security in his 1990 NSSR, "a commitment to free trade and open international economic system."[9] Although this report also omitted economic strength as a vital interest, the administration acknowledged that:

> America's national power continues to rest on the strength and resilience of our economy. To retain a position of international leadership, we need not only skilled diplomacy and strong military forces, but also a dynamic economic base with competitive agricultural and manufacturing sectors, an innovative research establishment, solid infrastructure, secure supplies of energy, and vibrant financial and service industries. We will pursue a strategy that integrates domestic economic policies with a market-opening trade policy, enhanced cooperation among major industrial countries, and imaginative solutions…[10]

Critics of expanding the integration of the global economies cite the vulnerabilities which these dependent relationships foster. The US Commission on National Security/21st Century offered the following perspective:

> The national security of all advanced states will be increasingly affected by the vulnerabilities of the evolving global economic infrastructure. The economic future will be more difficult to predict and to manage. The emergence or strengthening of significant global economic actors will cause realignments of economic power. Global changes in the next quarter-century will produce opportunities and vulnerabilities. Overall global economic growth will continue, albeit unevenly. At the same time, economic integration and fragmentation will co-exist. Serious and unexpected economic downturns, major disparities of wealth, volatile capital flows, increasing vulnerabilities in global electronic

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[7] President, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, (March 2006), 25.

[8] Ibid., 1.

[9] President, *National Security Strategy of the United States*, (March 1990), 1.

[10] Ibid., 21.

> infrastructures, labor and social disruptions, and pressures for increased protectionism will also occur.[11]

By leading the effort to safeguard economic freedoms and international trade relationships, the U.S. is likely to keep economic strength as interest vital to national security.

Protecting the Territory, Citizens and Interests

It is not surprising that protecting the territory, citizens, and interests of the country frequently has been identified as a vital interest or objective in the post-Cold War NSSRs. In six of President Clinton's seven reports, the physical defense of the nation was underscored as a vital interest. In all four reports of his second term, President Clinton expanded the definition of *vital interest* to include the physical security of our allies' territory.[12] Protecting the nation and its citizens was not a vital interest in any of the reports of the two Bush presidencies. However, President Bush's 1990 report reflected a recurring tone in all of his strategies: "Throughout our history, our national security strategy has pursued broad, consistent goals. We have always sought to protect the safety of the nation, its citizens, and its way of life."[13] Similar to his father's language, President Bush's 2006 NSSR pointed out the following responsibility of the government: "Yet the first duty of the United States Government remains what it always has been: to protect the American people and American interests. It is an enduring

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[11] US Commission on National Security/21st Century, New World Coming, American Security in the 21st Century, September 15, 1999, http://www.fas.org/man/docs/nwc/nwc.htm, (accessed December 15, 2007), 5.

[12] President. *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, (May 1997), 9; President, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, (October 1998), 5; President, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, (December 1999), 1; President, *A National Security Strategy for a Global Age*, (December 2000), 4.

[13] President, *National Security Strategy of the United States*, (March 1990), 4.

American principle that this duty obligates the government to anticipate and counter threats, using all elements of national power…"[14] In those NSSRs in which protecting the security of the nation and its citizens was not designated a vital interest or objective, the administrations did emphasize a clear commitment to provide that protection. What might remain unclear is the extent to which an *ally's* security must be threatened in order to warrant U.S. protection. The next chapter reveals the instances in which the U.S. intervened on behalf of its allies. Those situations provide additional insights that will help the operational planner determine under what conditions a president is likely to employ military forces.

Promoting Leadership and Democracy

Although the common vital interests discussed previously might seem to communicate the most important messages in these national security strategies, certain themes shared by each of these presidents bear attention. One of these mega-themes that each of the Presidents articulated in the post-Cold War era is that America cannot return to a strategy of protectionism nor isolationism. But even more important than encouraging global integration, these presidents were promoting U.S. global leadership in pursuit of spreading democracy across the globe. President George H. W. Bush explained that the collapse of the Soviet Union left the U.S. in an unprecedented position of advantage:

> For America, there can be no retreat from the world's problems. Within the broader community of nations, we see our own role clearly. We must not only protect our citizens and interests, but help create a new world in which our fundamental values not only survive but flourish. We must work with others, but we must also be a leader.[15]

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[14] President, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, (March 2006), 18.

In his final NSSR, President Bush left no room for misinterpretation that *his* goal for American leadership in the world was to usher in the Age of Democratic Peace in the 21st Century:

> …real peace—not the illusory or fragile peace maintained by a balance of terror, but an enduring democratic peace based on shared values…It is the peace and liberty we wish upon every region of the world, enabling free peoples and free economies everywhere to flourish and prosper.[16]

Citing the failure to prevent World War II as the U.S. turned inward during 1920's and 1930's, President Bush compared the post-Cold War era with the interwar period.[17] President Clinton confirmed a similar strategy to promote strong American leadership on the world's stage and cited a motivation nearly identical to his predecessor:

> Our nation can only address this era's dangers and opportunities if we remain actively engaged in global affairs. We are the world's greatest power, and we have global interests as well as responsibilities. As our nation learned after World War I, we can find no security for America in isolationism, nor prosperity in protectionism…Without our active leadership and engagement abroad, threats will fester and our opportunities will narrow.[18]

So what was the Clinton strategy for leadership and engagement? The title of his first three NSSRs sheds light on the aim of his leadership, The National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement. In the introduction of his first NSSR, President Clinton characterized the strategy as based on enlarging the communities of market democracies while deterring and containing threats to the nation, its allies, and its interests because, "The more that democracy and political and economic liberalization take hold in the world, particularly in countries of geostrategic importance to us, the safer our nation is

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[15] President, *National Security Strategy of the United States*, (August 1991), v.

[16] President, *National Security Strategy of the United States*, (January 1993), ii.

[17] President, *National Security Strategy of the United States*, (August 1991), 2.

[18] President, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*, (July 1994), ii.

likely to be and the more our people are likely to prosper."[19] Changed for the 1996 report, and contained in all of his remaining NSSRs, the benefits of democracy were portrayed this way:

> We believe that our goals of enhancing our security, bolstering our economic prosperity and promoting democracy are mutually supportive. Secure nations are more likely to support free trade and maintain democratic structures. Free market nations with growing economies and strong open trade ties are more likely to feel secure and to work toward freedom. And democratic states are less likely to threaten our interests and more likely to cooperate with the United States to meet security threats and promote free trade and sustainable development.[20]

President Clinton added to the 1999 NSSR an additional benefit that democratic states are more likely to protect the rights of their people—a persistent theme in the Bush 2002 and 2006 NSSRs.

As documented in the elder Bush and Clinton NSSRs, President George W. Bush's 2002 NSSR reflected a similar tone, "America will encourage the advancement of democracy and economic openness…because these are the best foundations for domestic stability and international order."[21] Not identical in words, but nearly identical in message to President Clinton's trilogy of democracy, free markets, and security, the theme continued in the 2006 NSSR:

> Free governments are accountable to their people, govern their territory effectively, and pursue economic and political policies that benefit their citizens. Free governments do not oppress their people or attack other free nations. Peace and international stability are most reliably built on a foundation of freedom.[22]

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[19] President, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*, (July 1994), 2.

[20] President, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*, (February 1996), ii; President. *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, (May 1997), 2; President, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, (October 1998), 2; President, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, (December 1999), 4; President, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, (September 2002), 2.

[21] President, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, (September 2002), preface.

Speaking to the disadvantages of fear, isolationism, and protectionism, President Bush reconfirmed a commitment to American leadership in the world:

> Yet history teaches that every time American leaders have taken this path, the challenges have only increased and the missed opportunities have left future generations less secure. This Administration has chosen the path of confidence. We choose leadership over isolationism, and the pursuit of free and fair trade and open markets over protectionism.[23]

What this analysis shows is a historical commitment, published in the national strategies, to provide American leadership to the international community. Returning to the Constitution's preamble and the Declaration of Independence explains that the evolution of an American strategy for democratization and expanding free markets is in a way, nothing more than the globalization of original American values. The study also reveals how successive presidents expanded the list of perceived benefits to foreign states and the advantages to U.S. national security which come with a strategy of expanding democratic principles.

Selective Involvement

Another theme common to the post-Cold War presidents is the claim that the U.S. cannot solve every international security dispute. The first President Bush emphasized that:

> "We cannot be the world's policeman with responsibility for solving all the world's security problems. But we remain the country to whom others turn when in distress. This faith in us creates burdens…American leadership must include mobilizing the world community to share the danger and the risk. But the failure of others to bear their burden would not excuse us. In the end, we are answerable

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[22] President, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, (March 2006), preface.

[23] Ibid.

> to our own interests and our own conscience—to our ideals and to our history—for what we do with the power we have.[24]

President Clinton discussed this perspective in the 1998 NSSR, and the premise populated each of his reports, "Our strategy is tempered by recognition that there are limits to America's involvement in the world. We must be selective in the use of our capabilities and the choices we make always must be guided by advancing our objectives of a more secure, prosperous, and free America."[25] President George W. Bush's 2002 NSSR repeated his predecessor's emphasis that U.S. leadership must be selective in its employment of national resources.[26] However, the tone in his 2006 NSSR reflects a very active international strategy:

> Regional conflicts do not stay isolated for long and often spread or devolve into humanitarian tragedy or anarchy. Outside parties can exploit them to further other ends, much as al-Qaida exploited the civil war in Afghanistan. This means that even if the United States does not have a direct stake in a particular conflict, our interests are likely to be affected over time.[27]

One interpretation of the Bush viewpoint is that every international conflict has the potential to *eventually* become a direct threat to U.S. security. Hence, it provides a political license for the U.S. *to be* the world's policeman. The next chapter surveys each instance in which these presidents have employed military forces to answer whether or not their actions were equivalent to their stated strategy. The U.S. Commission on National Security/21st Century placed emphasis on the importance of America, with its overwhelming power, to *walk the talk*:

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[24] President, *National Security Strategy of the United States*, (August 1991), 2.

[25] President, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, (October 1998), 2.

[26] President, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, (Sept 2002), 9.

[27] President, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, (March 2006), 14.

> Having become a global power, the United States now holds a responsibility it will not abandon, both for the safeguarding of American interests and the broader interests of global peace and security. The United States is the first nation with fully global leadership responsibilities, but there are more and less effective ways to lead. Tone matters. Leadership is not the same as dominance; everyone else's business need not also be America's.[28]

An Alliance Strategy

The final persistent theme which this paper highlights among the post-Cold War NSSRs is the commitment to the country's allies, partners, and friends. For the Bush Administration in 1990, this element of national strategy ranked as their first priority in foreign policy: "We have never been able to go it alone, even in the early days of the Cold War when our major allies were still suffering from the devastation and exhaustion of World War II. Even to attempt to do so would alter our way of life and national institutions and would jeopardize the very values we are seeking to protect."[29] For President Clinton, an alliance strategy was recurrent, and in the 1998 NSSR, his administration elevated durable relationships with allies and friendly nations to a vital interest.[30] Contrary to his predecessor's commitment to not go it alone, President Clinton communicated to audiences of his strategy that, "We must always be prepared to act alone when that is our most advantageous course. But many of our security objectives are best achieved—or can only be achieved—through our alliances and other formal security structures, or as a leader of an ad hoc coalition formed around a specific objective."[31] The Bush 2006 strategy echoed the commitment to an alliance strategy, and

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[28] The U.S. Commission on National Security/21st Century, Seeking a National Security Strategy: The Phase II Report on a U.S. National Security Strategy for the 21st Century, April 15, 2000, 15, http://www.fas.org/man/docs/nwc/PhaseII.pdf (accessed December 16, 2007) .

[29] President, *National Security Strategy of the United States*, (March 1990), 15.

[30] President, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, (October 1998), 2.

moreover, was more aligned with President's Clinton's approach to act unilaterally when necessary, stating it this way, "…we must be prepared to act alone if necessary, while recognizing that there is little of lasting consequence that we can accomplish in the world without the sustained cooperation of our allies and partners."[32]

In summary, there have been four vital interests common to the majority of the Presidential administrations in the post-Cold War era. These were access to foreign oil supplies, a stable Europe, U.S. economic strength, and the primary duty to protect the nation's territory, citizens and interests. Also noteworthy are the common themes of (1) strong global leadership promoting democracy and free markets, (2) selective involvement in world disputes, and (3) a commitment to an alliance strategy.

What They're Saying Differently

A comparison of the twelve NSSRs might yield untold differences in objectives, goals, and interests. However, this paper draws attention to only two key differences. Both of these differences are solely present in President Clinton's NSSRs. The first major difference is that President Clinton defined three categories of national interests: vital interests, very important interests, and other or humanitarian interests. The second major difference was that President Clinton specifically discussed the key factors governing his decisions of how and when to employ military forces.

Defining National Interests

President Clinton defined vital interests to mean those broad interests important to the survival and safety of the nation. Examples were the physical security of U.S. territory, the safety of allies and U.S. citizens, the economic well-being of U.S. society,

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[31] Ibid.

[32] President, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, (March 2006), 37.

and the protection of critical infrastructures. The next level down from vital was important national interests—defined as affecting the well-being and character of the world, but not affecting the nation's survival. Examples of important national interests were regions with sizeable U.S. economic interests, commitments to allies, or environmental protection. The final category of humanitarian or other interests involved circumstances in which the nation acts because U.S. values demand it. Examples include responding to manmade disasters, promoting human rights, or halting violations of those rights.[33]

When to Employ Military Force

Although President Clinton acknowledged that it would be unwise to specify in advance all limitations on the use of force, his strategy cited that it was appropriate to identify several basic principles guiding his decision on when to use force:

> The decision on whether and when to use force is therefore dictated first and foremost by our national interests. In those specific areas where our vital or survival interests are at stake, our use of force will be decisive and, if necessary, unilateral. In other situations posing a less immediate threat, our military engagement must be targeted selectively on those areas that most affect our national interests — for instance, areas where we have a sizable economic stake or commitments to allies, and areas where there is a potential to generate substantial refugee flows into our nation or our allies.[34]

What the Clinton strategy demonstrated is threats to a U.S. vital interests would be met with non-negotiable military reprisal to protect the nation's survival. While posing a less immediate thereat, these *other* situations in which the U.S. had a sizeable economic stake or a commitment to allies could still warrant military force. The analysis in the following

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[33] President, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, (December 1999), 1-2.

[34] President, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*, (February 1995), 12.

chapter will seek to determine if these stated parameters did, in fact, guide President Clinton's decisions to employ U.S. troops.

What They're Not Saying

In order to see clearly what these administrations were not saying, the scrutiny must begin with an understanding of not only *what* they said, but *how* they said it. From the research presented in the previous chapter, the first given is that none of the Presidents mention whether or not any priorities existed among the vital interests. Second, each of the reports contain multiple lists and categories of goals, objectives, interests, and values with respect to the national agenda for specific nations, regions, and intergovernmental organizations. None of *these* lists are prioritized, either. Third, as the previous chapter discusses, the reports reveal a consistent trend to assign, in varying degrees, an abundance of superlative modifiers such as *priorities, strategic priorities, the highest priority, critical, crucial, essential,* et cetera. This excessive use of these expressions constitutes, at the very least—an overstatement, and more likely—an exaggeration of the nation's true priorities. Fourth, since the Presidents do not assign ranked priorities among the vital interests, other national interests, objectives or goals, there can be no effective way to determine the relative importance between them. President Clinton attempted to comply with Goldwater-Nichols with his categories of national interests—vital, important, and other.[35] Yet, critics might argue that ultimately these encompassing definitions permitted the administration to determine that any situation or issue could fall into one of the categories, and therefore, would be in the

[35] McClelland, Patrick A., *The National Security Strategy of the United States: Grand Strategy or Propaganda?* Thesis (Norfolk: Joint Forces Staff College, 2007), 6.

nation's interest.[36] Collectively, the National Security Strategy Reports' (1) profuse categories of interests, goals, and objectives, (2) absence of any established priority rankings between vital interests or otherwise, and (3) an exaggeration of priorities due to superlative modifiers creates an outward visualization that *everything* is a priority, but ultimately reveals an inward realization that *nothing* is a priority. With an understanding that the primary purpose of the NSSRs is to inform the authorizing committees of Congress, and to a lesser degree, so that a prioritized budget process can occur, these reports appear to fall short of their intended purpose. For the operational planner, the NSSR's political impreciseness seems to lack sufficient guidance for determining those situations in which the current administration would authorize U.S. military action. With a high operations tempo in several theaters, operational planners do not have time to plan under the premise that everything contained in the NSSR is a priority.

Chapter Summary

Many of the similarities in National Security Strategies of the post-Cold War era discussed in this chapter are the elements that have persisted to form the foundation of a post-containment and post-anti-Communism security apparatus. The vital interest of securing access to foreign oil supplies, according to the U.S. Commission on National Security/21st Century will likely persist well into the next decade.[37] With more than 100 bilateral treaties and other agreements with nations and organizations in Europe, a stable European continent is likely to continue as a U.S. vital interest for an indefinite period.[38]

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[36] Mercado, Leo A., *The National Security Strategy and National Interests, Quantity or Quality?* Thesis (Carlisle Barracks: United States Army War College,2002), 2.

[37] US Commission on National Security/21st Century, New World Coming, American Security in the 21st Century, September 15, 1999, http://www.fas.org/man/docs/nwc/nwc.htm, (accessed December 15, 2007), 5.

The value of a robust U.S. economy underpinned each of the strategies as critical or essential to success in the domestic and international environments. This was often a vital interest was specifically tied, in President Clinton's strategies, to the Constitutional responsibility for the government to promote the general welfare.

Through a connection to several original national interests, U.S. presidents in the post-Cold War era have incontestably remained committed to protecting the nation's territory, its citizens, and its interests. As Constitutional responsibilities, these protections were not invented in the post-Cold War era, and should be expected to remain an enduring element of the national security strategy.

In addition to the common vital interests mentioned in this chapter, U.S. presidents have employed several recurring themes including an obligation to provide American leadership in the world. In this theme, the presidents have found a secure foothold to promote the benefits of democracy and free economic markets in all regions of the world. The NSSRs have also reflected a theme of selective involvement, with a calculus that involves limits to America's participation in world affairs, while ironically however, confessing that inaction by other nations is not an excuse for a nation like the U.S. with the power to affect a solution. The last mutual theme of the NSSRs detailed in this chapter is a staunch loyalty to the nation's allies. In many instances, as the next chapter will show, U.S. presidents employed military forces into harm's way when no direct interests were present, but they acted on behalf on a formal alliance.

This chapter also identified two characteristics present in many of President Clinton's NSSRs but distinctly different from the strategies of his predecessor and his

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[38] U.S. Department of State, *Treaties in Force 2007, November 1, 2007, Part 1*, http://www.state.gov/s/l/treaty/treaties/2007/section1/index.htm, (accessed March 29, 2008), 2-313.

successor. The first difference was that Clinton's reports included definitions of the categories of national interests, and the second difference was the inclusion of a general description of how and when he would employ military forces.

The last section of this chapter showed a key omission of the NSSRs, real priorities. The multitude of grandiose modifiers and the lack of any prioritization of the stated objectives, goals, interests, and priorities hide the true national priorities.

The next chapter illustrates the relationship between the national security strategy and the historical record of the use of the U.S. military. The analysis will show those times that the president employed the military and whether or not the action can be tied to interests in the NSSR. The results of that analysis provide the basis for recommendations to the operational planner for discerning the true priorities for employing military force if they hope to prioritize their planning efforts.

CHAPTER 5: THE NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY STILL SPEAKS

The Cold War did eventually end. As far as the cult of national security was concerned, this ostensibly monumental development hardly mattered: our security preoccupations survived the passing of the Soviet Union intact. The symbiotic relationship between the national security state and the imperial presidency endured into the 1990s. As the various alarms of that decade demonstrated, even after the collapse of communism—even when history itself had "ended"—the drumbeat of ongoing crisis continued.[1]

Andrew Bacevich, Professor of History and International Relations
Boston University, 2007

Chapter Introduction

The first section of this final chapter will analyze the historical record of military employment to permit a reasonable understanding of the national priorities for employing force in the post-Cold War era. Here, the author will demonstrate a direct relationship between the NSSRs and the instances of U.S. military action. The focus of the second section is to provide an understanding of how to interpret the political impreciseness demonstrated in the NSSRs to inform operational planners what factors to consider as they scan the international horizon for potential employments of U.S. military forces.

Record of Military Employment

In Panama and the Persian Gulf, in Somalia and Haiti, in the Balkans and the Taiwan Straights, George. H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton acted in accordance with the dictates of the established national security paradigm. In doing so, and by no means incidentally, they sustained the freedom of presidential action that had evolved during the postwar era.[2]

Andrew Bacevich

To provide the proper background, it is important to remind the reader that the U.S. has formally declared war only 11 times against foreign nations. The last occurrence was in 1942 during World War II, when the U.S. declared war Bulgaria,

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[1] Edward J. Bacevich, ed., *The Long War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), ix.

[2] Ibid.

Hungary, and Romania. The historical record contains many military engagements in which there was no formal declaration of war. The Vietnam War, the Persian Gulf War of 1991, and the global action against terrorists, and the Iraq War of 2003 are a few examples. Congress provided authorization for each of the instances in the historical record in some form shy of war, except for the Korean War.[3] This fact is met with criticism by American University's Distinguished Historian, Anna Nelson:

> The tools of war are many. First among equals are the military services, which supply the logistics as well as foot soldiers. But no recent war in the United States has been fought just because the military wanted to go to war. Presidents, advised by hand-picked assistants, including the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI), decide whether to lead the country into war or keep the peace. Because we no longer "declare war" in the constitutional sense…[4]

The history of the executive office's use of force includes instances in which the president deployed the U.S. military into situations of conflict, potential conflict, or for other than peacetime purposes. Most of the instances surveyed for this chapter are based on presidential reports to Congress related to the War Powers Resolution.[5] An investigation of the military actions since the end of the Cold War reveals four main categories for justification of authorizing U.S. military action: vital interests, terrorism, alliances and treaties, and other interests.

Vital Interests

[3] Richard F. Grimmett, *Instances of Use of United States Armed Forces Abroad, 1798-2007* (Congressional Research Service, 2007), i. The report does not contain, and the author does not otherwise present, covert actions, disaster relief, and routine alliance training exercises.

[4] Anna Nelson, "The Evolution of the National Security State," in *The Long War*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 266.

[5] The primary source used in this paper to analyze the use of U.S. forces since the end of the Cold War is the *Congressional Research Service Report for Congress: Instances of Use of United States Armed Forces Abroad, 1798-2007.*

Since 1989, there have been 105 reports to the U.S. Congress outlining the use of U.S. military forces. In 31 of 105 instances, or 29.5 percent of the time, the presidents employed the armed forces when directly related to vital national interests. The specific vital interests were 12 occurrences involving access to foreign oil, 18 occasions involving the defense of U.S. embassies, and one case involving the freedom of the seas. The U.S. deployment into Saudi Arabia to defend the access to foreign oil in the Persian Gulf region after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait is a prominent example of this category. Another example was the 1992 evacuation of U.S. citizens from Sierra Leone after military leaders had overthrown the government.[6]

Terrorism

In 13 of 105 instances, or 12.4 percent of the time, presidents authorized military action in support of counter terrorism operations—some were pre-emptive attacks and some were retaliatory strikes following an attack. An example of these operations was the deployment of naval personnel to provide medical, security, and disaster response assistance following the attack in 2000 on the USS Cole near Yemen's territorial waters.[7] A different example was when President Clinton authorized airstrikes in 1998 against camps and installations in Afghanistan and Sudan used by the Osama bin Laden terrorist organization. This was in response to the bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.[8] In support of global operations against terrorism since 2001, President Bush

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[6] Author's analysis of Richard F. Grimmett, *Instances of Use of United States Armed Forces Abroad, 1798-2007* (Congressional Research Service, 2007). Data compiled from pages 19-40.

[7] Grimmett, 31.

[8] Grimmett, 27.

has made nine separate reports authorizing military force, or 8.6% of the total, for air, land, and maritime operations.[9]

Alliances and Treaties

In 57 of 105 instances, or 54.3 percent of the time, presidents authorized U.S. military action in compliance with a formal treaty such as NATO or as part of a United Nations (UN) coalition. Excluding coalitions formed for global operations against terrorism, the U.S. authorized military force 41 times in support of NATO and 15 times in support of UN operations. The transport of 100 Belgian troops and 300 French troops into Zaire after widespread looting is an example of an ad hoc coalition formed in support of a partner nation—not a formal treaty.[10] This coalition also served a U.S. vital interest by using the return flights to evacuate American citizens.[11]

Other Non-Vital Operations

In 4 of 105 instances, or 3.8% of the time, presidents authorized military force in support of security or counter-drug operations. Examples of these are the 1993 airdrop of relief supplies to Muslims surrounded by Serbian forces in Bosnia, and the military assistance sent to Columbia, Bolivia, and Peru to combat illicit drug traffickers under the Bush administration's Andean Initiative in War on Drugs in 1989.[12]

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[9] Author's analysis of Richard F. Grimmett, *Instances of Use of United States Armed Forces Abroad, 1798-2007* (Congressional Research Service, 2007). Data compiled from pages 19-40.

[10] Grimmett, 20.

[11] Author's analysis of Richard F. Grimmett, *Instances of Use of United States Armed Forces Abroad, 1798-2007* (Congressional Research Service, 2007). Data compiled from pages 19-40.

[12] Grimmett, 19, 21; Author's analysis of Richard F. Grimmett, *Instances of Use of United States Armed Forces Abroad, 1798-2007* (Congressional Research Service, 2007). Data compiled from pages 19-40.

Table 4.1. Instances of the Use of U.S. Armed Forces in Post-Cold War Era

Category	% of instances	Instances
Alliances & Treaties	54.3	57
Vital Interests	29.5	31
Operations Against Terrorism	12.4	13
Other/non-vital	3.8	4
Total	100.0	105

Source: *Instances of Use of United States Armed Forces Abroad, 1798-2007*.

Note: Author's computations.

Interests, Allies, and Terrorists

The U.S. national security strategies contain a multitude of objectives, goals, and interests in various areas such as economics, alliances, the environment, drug-trafficking, intelligence, energy, space, arms control, refugees, regional strategies, and trade agreements—to cite a few. The wide and mixed use of descriptions such as vital, critical, crucial, and essential reveal an apparent contradiction between the stated vital interests and other goals, objectives, and sub-strategies such as the regional strategies. The methodology in this paper has sought to find a solution to enable operational planners to grasp the true priorities contained in the NSSRs of the past, so that by induction, which is generally drawing to the finer, they might ascertain specific indications of where U.S. presidents are likely to employ military force in the future.

The data in this chapter demonstrates that alliances and formal treaties are the largest factors governing the employment of military forces by U.S. presidents in the post-Cold War period. Alliances and treaties were key indicators in 54.3 percent of military force employments since 1989. Deploying troops in support of stated vital interests accounts for the next largest factor—29.5 percent of the 105 instances. Combining support for allies and vital interests accounts for 84 percent of the instances of

military force. Retaliatory and pre-emptive strikes against terrorist organizations and operations account for the other significant category of justification for military force, occurring in 12.4 percent of the 105 total instances. Excluding vital interests, formal alliances or treaties, and terrorist organizations, additional actions involving military forces occurred in less than 4 percent of the total 105 instances since the end of the Cold War.

The lexicon of vital interests has been transformed at various times since the end of the Cold War era. What was once reserved for the overarching survival interests have come to include access to and the unimpeded use of space, a stable Europe, and the global war against terrorism—all very important interests, but the failure of which would not directly cause the total loss of the U.S. people or territory. Critics have argued for decades over the definition of vital interests, limits on the power of the president as commander-in-chief, and the role which the exportation of democracy and market economies plays in maintaining international stability. These are important debates, but they are not the focus of this paper. What this brief comparative analysis has attempted to provide is a niche that shows the operational planner how to interpret the vagaries and political impreciseness of the NSSR through comparing the interests in the foundational documents, vital interests, other worldwide interests, goals, and objective, and the actual employment record of the U.S. military. The implication is that the operational planner should not be uninformed—the NSSR and the decision to use military force have a direct relationship. This study is instructive in circumstances in which the U.S. has treaties and alliances; the likelihood is that the president will authorize military force. When the

planner determines that a situation involves a vital interest or terrorist activities, he or she knows that the implied imperative is that the president stands ready to use force.

If the past twelve NSSRs are indicative of the future, then the operational planner can expect the next administration to produce a strategy that is also vague with respect to the priorities among the vital interests, worldwide goals, and objectives. This political impreciseness can be interpreted. The operational planner can know that the parameters are nearly set—vital interests, alliances and treaties, and terrorist activities are the types of situations that denote the real priorities. As such, these situations require serious planning efforts in preparation for the possibility of authorized military action. While national values and moral imperatives from the nation's foundational documents do carry weight in the NSSR, they do not carry as much force as these three: vital interests, alliances and treaties, and terrorists.

Chapter Summary

This chapter documented the historical record of the reports made to Congress regarding the 105 instances of presidential decisions to employ U.S. military forces into hostile action or situations likely to devolve into hostile action. The data demonstrated a direct relationship between the NSSR and those decisions. Employing forces in support of an alliance or treaty was the single greatest factor. These alliances or treaties were not necessarily stated in the NSSRs; however, each of the three presidents stipulated in the NSSRs a commitment to strong relationships with U.S. allies. The next single greatest factor governing the employment of forces was in support of protecting the nation's vital interests—access to foreign oil and protecting U.S. embassies, personnel, and citizens abroad were the vital interests most often defended. The final significant category

connected to the use of military action was the use of pre-emptive or retaliatory strikes on terrorist organizations and activities.

While apparently diluting the significance of stated objectives, interests, and goals, the rampant use in the NSSRs of the terms vital, critical, crucial, essential, et cetera, are ultimately political fodder and do not represent the nation's highest priorities. That distinction rests with the three categories of alliances and treaties, vital interests, and offensive actions against terrorist organizations.

CONCLUSION

The world that lies ahead for the next 25 years will surely challenge our received wisdom about how to protect American interests and advance American values. In such an environment the United States needs a sure understanding of its objectives, and a coherent strategy to deal with both the dangers and the opportunities ahead.[1]

Hart-Rudman Commission, 1999

The National Security Strategy Report often serves as the grand strategy of the United States of America and according to the law, describes the interests, goals, and objectives that are vital to the nation's security. The NSSR directly affects other national-level strategies, making it the reference of choice whether formulating lower-level strategies or planning for future military conflicts. The end of the Cold War marked another era in U.S. history, and a review of this period reveals rapid and massive changes to the world's economic, political, and communications landscape blurring the lines between domestic and international agendas. As the NSSRs have become increasingly focused on global affairs, the presidents and their administrations have ascribed a vast array of grandiose modifiers to nearly every objective or goal in their reports. The lack of any apparent prioritization among the national interests and objectives has resulted in nineteen years of political impreciseness, leaving the operational planner to filter through the plethora of worldwide interests, goals, and objectives to identify the real *priorities and interests w*hich the President is likely to defend with U.S. military forces.

The NSSR is shaped by the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 and the law in its present form. Both the bill and the law as amended illustrate that the primary audiences

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[1] US Commission on National Security/21st Century, New World Coming, American Security in the 21st Century, September 15, 1999, http://www.fas.org/man/docs/nwc/nwc.htm, (accessed December 15, 2007), 9. The US Commission on National Security/21st Century was also known as the Hart-Rudman Commission.

of the NSSR are the authorizing committees in Congress and the secondary audiences include domestic and international readers. The NSSR is further influenced by the broad values, interests, and objectives contained in the preamble of the U.S. Constitution and the specific rights, protections, and responsibilities in its articles and amendments, and in the Declaration of Independence. The often-repeated undertakings of the post-Cold War NSSRs have been protecting the nation, promoting the general welfare, and ensuring the freedoms of democracy. Although linked to these foundational documents, the objectives, goals, and interests of the post-Cold War strategies often changed from year to year and between administrations. Adding to confusion over the reports' true priorities, the myriad of objectives, goals, and interests described as vital, essential, critical or crucial portrayed the implication that *every* objective, goal, or interest was, or at least could be, the top priority. Further bewilderment is present in the apparent contradictions in the simultaneous tendering that the U.S. cannot solve all of the world's problems but that America's leadership role in the world is critical—a view espoused by each of the post-Cold War presidents.

In addition to the ties to the foundational documents, the NSSRs of these presidents contained several enduring similarities—first, four nearly identical vital interests of access to foreign oil, stability in Europe, economic strength, and the duty to protect the nation's territory, citizens, and interests; second, several comparable themes of promoting democracy and free markets abroad, a firm commitment to our allies and partners, and as mentioned above, an unwillingness to be the world's policeman.

When viewed together through a common lens, the NSSRs' multiple un-prioritized vital interests, other interests, goals, and objectives combined with the prolific

use of superlative modifiers creates an environment in which *everything* is a priority. Given the original purpose and audience of the NSSR—to *inform the authorizing committees of Congress*—these imprecise reports fail to serve their purpose. Furthermore, the NSSRs lack a clear signal of when and where the administration might employ the U.S. military.

Comparing the vital interests and other objectives of the NSSRs with the historical record of employing U.S. military forces provides the final pieces of the argument in this paper. Although the NSSRs contain a myriad of other interests that appear to contend with the vital interests for priority, the historical record reveals that the main reason post-Cold War presidents authorized military actions was in support of formal alliances or treaties (54 percent of the time). The second most-often cited motive for military action was to protect or defend the vital interests (30 percent of the time). The third major reason was in support of attacking terrorist organizations and operations (12 percent). The least-used category involved non-vital or other interests (4 percent of the time).

All-comers should be informed—the NSSR and the decision to use U.S. military forces have a direct relationship. The operational planner can break the code of political impreciseness profusely drowning most pages of the NSSR and understand that the heap of political fodder does not represent the nation's true priorities—those which the president is willing to sacrifice the U.S. military's sweat, tears, blood, and treasure. While national values and moral imperatives from the nation's foundational documents do carry weight in the NSSRs, the operational planner can understand that formal

alliances, the protection of the stated vital interests, and counter-terrorism operations are the most likely indicators of future military action authorized by the president.

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